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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"*****"

They're calling it "The Blizzard of 2013"; and we're in the middle of it right now here in the Northeast! The prediction is that we're going to get a minimum of two feet of snow, and upwards of three feet!

The snow started this morning, with off-and-on squalls. Then it became a steady flurry; and now it's really picked up. The forecast is for the bulk of the storm to arrive late tonight into the morning. I'm not looking forward to what will await us when waking up on Saturday! But, we have two snowblowers ready to go, so I guess we're prepared.

Hopefully, you're not in this blizzard's path, and able to enjoy a relaxing weekend!

Until next time...

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The Little-known Apple Lisa: Five Quirks and Oddities

Thirty years ago, Apple unveiled the Apple Lisa, a pioneering machine that introduced the mouse-driven graphical user interface to a wide audience and opened a new chapter in personal computer history.

The Mac borrowed heavily from the Lisa, and the Mac went on to great things while the Lisa floundered. As a result, it's tempting to treat the Lisa as merely a footnote in the history of Apple. But as anyone who has used a real Lisa knows, Apple's first GUI-based computer played host to many distinctive quirks and traits that tend to get overlooked in the history books.

The machine's 30th anniversary is as good a time as any to take a look at a handful of both odd and useful features that truly made the Lisa something unique.

At the factory, Apple assigned every Lisa a unique, unchangeable serial number permanently programmed into a chip on the motherboard. The first time you ran an application from a floppy or copied it to the Lisa's hard

disk, the machine serialized the application by writing its serial number to the application program. From then on, you could run the application only on that particular Lisa machine.

All software bought for a particular Lisa was locked to that machine, destroying any ability to sell the software used, and negating any future use of the software in the case of a massive hardware failure.

If the Lisa had become more popular (and if it had hosted more than about seven major applications), it's likely that users and the press would have objected strongly to this feature. Ironically, today's DRM, which links software to a certain account or piece of hardware, hearkens back to Lisa's copy protection mechanism.

To open a document on the Mac, you can run an application first and then load the document from the Open command, or double-click on the document icon in the Finder to load the document in its application.

In the Lisa Desktop Manager (its Finder equivalent), you see application icons, but they just let you copy the application between disks. To create a new document, you tear off a blank document from a virtual stack of paper associated with an application. You can then double-click that document to open it, which automatically loads the proper application.

In this way, Lisa OS is document-centric rather than partially document-centric like OS X; iOS is application-centric in that it never lets you handle documents outside of applications on the system.

On the Mac, you can't create two files with the exact same name in the same folder. Makes sense; if the computer stored two files with the same name, how would it know which one to open?

Amazingly, Lisa OS is one of the only operating systems in history (if not the only one; research pending) to allow duplicate file names. Each file was assigned a physical file name that represented the file on the disk, and a virtual file name provided by the user that showed up in the Lisa interface.

That way, two files could appear to be named Bob's Secret Recipes in Lisa's Desktop Manager, but the machine would know how to handle them on a lower level hidden from the user.

In 1999, American media delighted in speculating on the possible Y2K doomsday. Imagine the media ruckus if those machines had been saddled with the same limitation as the Lisa, which would accept only year dates between 1981 and 1995.

This bizarre restriction stems from the Lisa's use of a primitive real-time clock chip that stored the year as a 4-bit integer an integer from 0 to 15. Lisa hardware development solidified around 1980, so that became the base year (year 0), and 15 years after that was 1995. Why Apple forced the starting date one year ahead to 1981 is a mystery.

To keep time when the Lisa was unplugged, the Lisa clock chip depended on a four AA-cell NiCad battery pack that held a charge for only a few hours. These battery packs often busted, leaking corrosive acid over most remaining Lisas, ruining the circuit boards. (If you have a Lisa in your closet, take out the batteries now!)

Soft shutdown

On the lower right corner of the front of every Lisa sits a small white power button that becomes illuminated when the system is active. But this button does far more than power the system on or off. In fact, the button is a soft switch, which means its function is determined by software rather than a simple electrical connection.

The switch tells the Lisa to wake up from a very low power mode and restore to the screen from memory the previous computing session. The Lisa OS presents open windows and documents that you were working on before the shutdown.

A tap on the power button began a process that shut down the system gracefully, saving all open documents and storing window and application positions for later use.

The original Mac never tried to duplicate this feature. Only now has Apple come back to the idea, as it introduced a similar function with OS X Lion in 2011. The Lisa was ahead of its time.

Photoline Has Been Released as Freeware

Gerhard Huber of Computerinsel has given a free license for the Atari version of Photoline, a professional image and vector graphics editor.

Get the Photoline download at the ACP page.

Link: <http://acp.atari.org>

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->In This Week's Gaming Section      - PS4 Not The Gaming Powerhouse?
   " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "    Ouya Prepares for Yearly Release!
                                         Atari Gets A Lifeline!
                                         And much more!
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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## PlayStation 4 May Not Be The Gaming Powerhouse We've Been Expecting

Sony is scheduled to announce its next-generation PlayStation 4 console at a press conference in New York City on February 20th. Recent rumors have pegged the system as a gaming powerhouse with 16GB of RAM, 256GB of storage, and 1080p HD resolution in 3D at 60 fps, however this may not be

what the company is aiming for. According to a report from the Nikkei, Sony hopes the PlayStation 4 will act more as a home entertainment nerve center than a dedicated gaming system. An unnamed company executive reportedly said that the console's main selling point won't be its high-end specs, but rather the new styles of play it will introduce and its ability to connect and share to mobile devices. The PlayStation 4 is rumored to launch in October and could cost more than \$400.

#### The Next Xbox: Always Online, No Second-hand Games, 50GB Blu-ray Discs and New Kinect

Microsoft's next console will require an Internet connection in order to function, ruling out a second-hand game market for the platform. A new iteration of Xbox Live will be an integral part of Microsoft's next console, while improved Kinect hardware will also ship alongside the unit.

Sources with first-hand experience of Microsoft's next generation console have told us that although the next Xbox will be absolutely committed to online functionality, games will still be made available to purchase in physical form. Next Xbox games will be manufactured on 50GB-capacity Blu-ray discs, Microsoft having conceded defeat to Sony following its ill-fated backing of the HD-DVD format. It is believed that games purchased on disc will ship with activation codes, and will have no value beyond the initial user.

Our source has also confirmed that the next Xbox's recently rumored specs are entirely accurate. That means an AMD eight-core x64 1.6GHz CPU, a D3D11.x 800MHz graphics solution and 8GB of DDR3 RAM. As of now, the console's hard drive capacity is said to be undecided, but Microsoft's extended commitment to online delivery suggests that it will be the largest unit it has put inside a console to date.

Though the architectures of the next-gen Xbox and PlayStation both resemble that of PCs, several development sources have told us that Sony's solution is preferable when it comes to leveraging power. Studios working with the next-gen Xbox are currently being forced to work with only approved development libraries, while Sony is encouraging coders to get closer to the metal of its box. Furthermore, the operating system overhead of Microsoft's next console is more oppressive than Sony's equivalent, giving the PlayStation-badged unit another advantage.

Unlike Nintendo, Microsoft is continuing to invest heavily in motion-control interfaces, and a new, more reliably responsive Kinect will also ship alongside the next Xbox. Sony's next-generation console camera system is said to have a similar set of features, and is expected to be discussed at the company's PlayStation event on February 20.

#### Ouya Plans To Release A New Version of Its \$99 Console Every Year

After coming off of one of the most successful Kickstarter campaigns of all time, the team behind the \$99 Ouya game console have had their hands full. It was announced earlier this week that starting in June the Android-powered console will be sold at major retailers including

GameStop, Best Buy, Amazon, and Target. Ouya founder and CEO Julie Uhrman also revealed in an interview with The Verge on Thursday that the company plans to release a new Ouya model every year with improved specs and performance.

Our plan is to have a yearly refresh of Ouya where we leverage the best-performing chips and take advantage of falling component prices to create the best experience we can at the \$99 price point, she said. If we could do it for less than \$99, we would.

The current-generation Ouya is set to launch to Kickstarter backers in March. The console is equipped with 1.7GHz quad-core Tegra 3 processor, 8GB of internal storage, 1GB of RAM, a USB port and microUSB port, a special wireless controller, and Android 4.1 Jelly Bean.

### EVE Online s Battle of Asakai

EVE Online s complicated inter-corporate politics are often held together by fragile diplomatic treaties and economic agreements. So fragile, in fact, that a single misclick can lead to a fracas that quickly snowballs into all-out warfare. That s what happened to two of the spacefaring sandbox MMO s largest player alliances in the Battle of Asakai, a massive fleet vs. fleet onslaught involving 3,000 players piloting ships ranging from small interceptors to gargantuan capital ships.

Straight from the wreckage-strewn outcome of the battle, we re breaking down the basics of what happened for everyone to truly fathom one of the biggest engagements in the game s history.

On January 27, two of EVE s largest allied groups the ClusterF\*\*\* Coalition and the HoneyBadger Coalition clashed with full force in the low-sec Asakai VI region of the Kurala constellation. Both sides continually supplied reinforcements for hours, including Supercarriers and Titans, two of the largest vessel types in the game. In the end, the HoneyBadgers emerged victorious against the Clusters (as we re calling them).

The Clusters are led by the GoonSwarm Federation Alliance, a gigantic gamer horde originating from the Something Awful forums. Its leader, The Mittani, keeps and updates one of the most popular blogs charting the various events transpiring within EVE.

The HoneyBadgers are a coalition leading the Test Alliance, the primary collection of EVE gamers populating Reddit. A sub-alliance within the HoneyBadgers, the Pandemic Legion, focuses on PVP and inciting fleet actions wherever possible.

Years before, the Test Alliance was part of the HoneyBadgers in a hulking super-coalition. Seeking to carve out a piece of the galaxy for its own, a large portion of Test broke away from the accord to form HoneyBadgers, an independently operating group still pledging allegiance to Test but not to GoonSwarm. Strained relations between Test and GoonSwarm reached a breaking point after the leadership threatened open warfare against each other.

The cause

A single misclick.

No, really: A Titan pilot beneath the Cluster banner was attempting a bridge using a ship to act as an artificial warp corridor for other ships to Asakai VI when he accidentally warped himself straight into a very surprised Pandemic Legion fleet. The pilot, named Dabigredboat, immediately came under heavy attack as the Legion pounced on the extremely valuable ship.

The battle

Both Dabigredboat and members of the Legion bat-phoned called in reinforcements additional members of their alliances over the course of the battle. Eventually, nearly the entirety of Test and GoonSwarm became involved in the tremendous tussle, including the deployment of extra Titans and Supercarriers into the fleets.

Titans and Supercarriers are two of the most expensive, deadly, and rare ship types in EVE Online. A single Titan, bristling with gun emplacements and heavy armor, can need upwards of over 900 pilots to beat down into submission. Read that again: 900 pilots. And there were more than one of those behemoths in the battle.

The results

For the HoneyBadgers, losses sustained included six Dreadnoughts, 11 Carriers, and one Supercarrier. The Clusters suffered far worse: 44 Dreadnoughts, 29 Carriers, five Supercarriers, and three Titans.

Ultimately, GoonSwarm leader The Mittani called the Battle of Asakai a complete rout for the powerful Something Awful alliance. Estimated ISK (EVE's in-game currency) cost in damages are still being calculated, but early totals reach beyond 700 billion for both sides combined.

#### Pioneering Videogame Firm Atari Gets Lifeline

Atari, the pioneering video game company mired in bankruptcy proceedings in both France and the US, said on Tuesday it had found a last minute buyer after the latest leading shareholder gave up on turning the company around.

Atari SA "supports the proposed acquisition of the BlueBay Funds' interests in the Atari group by a longtime videogame professional and a fund advised by Alden Global Capital," the videogamer said in a statement.

Atari was born 40 years ago in California and jumped to fame by bringing the arcade game experience to living rooms worldwide with games such as Pong and Centipede.

The key buyer of the embattled company is Frenchman Frederic Chesnais, a former Atari executive, who is picking up 25 percent of the Atari SA's capital through his own fund Ker Ventures for 400 euros with hedge fund Alden providing financing.

"I made this move because I love the team, I know about games, I love the brand and in the past we have all spent nights and days to make it shine," said Chesnais who becomes Atari chief executive with the deal.

"I am just given a few weeks to put the Company back on track and I have to give it a try," Chesnais said.

In the buyout which includes taking over debt, Alden and Ker Ventures agree to pump 5.0 million euros (\$6.7 million) in Atari's US activities where the company hopes to break through.

A man carries a box with an Atari game in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on January 30, 2013. Atari, the pioneering video game company mired in bankruptcy proceedings in both France and the US, said on Tuesday it had found a last minute buyer after the latest leading shareholder gave up on turning the company around.

### Xbox Hoax Leads Armed Cops to Family

Members of a Florida family were shocked to be awakened in the middle of the night to find their house surrounded by police with guns drawn shouting at them to put their hands up.

Police Lt. Mike Beavers said the commotion was "very rare" for the small town of Oviedo, about 20 miles northeast of Orlando.

"This is the first time I've heard of it happening in our little town," Beavers told ABCNews.com.

The frightened family did not want to be identified but recounted the ordeal to ABC News' Orlando affiliate WFTV.

"I heard the doorbell ring," the father of two told WFTV. "We couldn't see anybody at the front of the door. All we saw was the rifle barrel."

The man said he and his wife originally believed they were being robbed.

"They have rifles, they have guns, and I said, 'Let's get out of the house,' so we ran down the hallway and got our two boys up," the father said.

"We were told to freeze and put our hands over our heads," he recalled. "They said, 'We're the police,' so that was a big relief."

What the family didn't realize was that an Xbox hoax had led the Oviedo police to its house. The police said they were responding to a call from AT&T saying it had received online messages from a person who said he was hiding inside the house, claiming that someone had been killed there and that others were being held hostage.

But when police arrived, all they found was a very surprised and confused family.

Upon investigation, police learned that the confusion all started when an Oviedo teenager living in another house called police saying his Xbox had been hacked.

The teenager said the hackers had threatened to call in bomb threats to his home if he did not meet their demands for gaming information.



When the teenager refused, the hackers sent fake messages reporting the killing and hostage taking at the teenager's former home. His previous address, where police showed up, was still connected to his Xbox.

The teenager did some of his own investigating, police said, and provided authorities with some possible identifying information on the hackers.

"The caller gave information to officers regarding two possible suspects, including IP addresses, Twitter and Facebook accounts and a possible name of one of the suspects," according to the police report. "The information provided to the officers revealed that both suspects were located in different states."

The information has been turned over to Oviedo detectives for further investigation.

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

## Dell Says Goodbye to Wall Street with \$2 billion Loan from Microsoft

Dell announced today that it has completed the terms of a deal that will take the company private, buying out stockholders at \$13.65 a share in a \$24.4 billion deal partially bankrolled by Microsoft. When the deal is complete, the company will be owned by a small group of private investors led by Dell CEO and founder Michael Dell and the investment firm Silver Lake.

The deal, according to the company, has been in progress since August of 2012, when Michael Dell first expressed an interest in taking the company private to Dell's board of directors. The board then formed a "Special Committee" to oversee negotiations.

For stockholders, the deal will pay out a 35 percent bonus over where Dell's stock price was as of January 11, before word of a possible deal leaked out and drove the stock price up. But the deal also includes a "go shop" provision that gives the company 45 days to solicit other interested parties for better offers.

Microsoft put up a \$2 billion loan to finance the deal rather than taking a stake in the company itself. Michael Dell put in his own cash and his 14 percent stake in the company, and additional cash is coming from Silver Lake's investment funds and from Michael Dell's investment group MSD Capital, LP, as well as from the company's own cash on hand. The rest is being financed by \$15 billion in debt from a raft of banks: BofA Merrill Lynch, Barclays, Credit Suisse, and RBC Capital Markets.

Just what influence Microsoft's stake in the financing of the deal gives the company in the operation of Dell after the deal is completed isn't clear nor is it clear what the terms of the debt are though those should

be reported when the transaction is complete.

Update: The Wall Street Journal has obtained a copy of a memo sent by Michael Dell to his employees:

Today, we announced a definitive agreement for me and global technology investment firm Silver Lake to acquire Dell and take it private.

This transaction is an exciting new chapter for Dell, our team and our customers. We can immediately deliver value to stockholders, while continuing to execute our long-term growth strategy and focus on helping customers achieve their goals.

Together, we have built an incredible business that generates nearly \$60 billion in annual revenue. We deliver enormous customer value through end-to-end solutions that are scalable, secure and easy to manage, and Enterprise Solutions and Services now account for 50 percent of our gross margins.

Dell's transformation is well underway, but we recognize it will still take more time, investment and patience. I believe that we are better served with partners who will provide long-term support to help Dell innovate and accelerate the company's transformation strategy. We'll have the flexibility to continue organic and inorganic investment, and grow our business for the long term.

I am particularly pleased to be in partnership with Silver Lake, a world-class investment firm with an outstanding reputation and significant experience in the technology sector. They know all the technology business models, understand the value chain and have an extremely strong global network of contacts. I am also glad that Microsoft is part of the transaction, further building on a nearly 30-year relationship.

I am honored to continue serving as chairman and CEO, and I look forward to working with all of you, including our current senior leadership team, to accelerate our efforts. There is much more we can accomplish together. I am committed to this journey and I am grateful for your dedication and support. Please, stay focused on delivering results for our customers and our company.

There is still considerable work to be done, and undoubtedly both challenges and triumphs lie ahead, but as always, we are making the right decisions to position Dell, our team and our customers for long-term success.

Michael

## Microsoft Plans To Spend A Seven-figure Sum To Convince You That Gmail Is Scary

Microsoft is not giving up its quest to scare customers away from Google services. Despite the fact that its previous efforts haven't exactly persuaded users, Microsoft is apparently ramping up a brand new ad campaign that will again attack Google for allegedly spying on users through Gmail, the Wall Street Journal reports.

Stefan Weitz, senior director of online services at Microsoft, tells the

Journal that the company will spend a seven-figure dollar amount to produce and distribute ads that criticize Gmail for the way it selects ads to be shown to users and that promote Microsoft's own Outlook.com as a less invasive alternative.

Of course, Microsoft has good reason to go after Google since its Google Apps business productivity suite has been creeping into the territory typically held by Microsoft Office, and now generates an estimated \$1 billion in revenues in 2012.

#### Hacker Gains Access to Bush Family Emails, Photos

A hacker apparently accessed private photos and emails sent between members of the Bush family, including both former presidents, and the Secret Service is investigating.

The Smoking Gun website said the hacker, who went by the online moniker "Guccifer," gained access to emails, photos, private telephone numbers and addresses of Bush family members and friends.

The website displayed photos it said came from the hacker, including one that purported to show the elder Bush during his recent stay in a Houston hospital, where the 88-year-old spent almost two months being treated for complications from a bronchial infection.

The authenticity of the photos and other details on the website could not immediately be confirmed. A spokesman for former President George H.W. Bush declined to comment on the reports.

"There's a criminal investigation and, as such, there's nothing else we can say," Jim McGrath said Friday.

Secret Service spokesman George Ogilvie said the agency was investigating. He would not elaborate.

In Dallas, where Bush's son, former President George W. Bush has a home, Bush spokesman Freddy Ford declined to make a statement.

The FBI in Houston, where the elder Bush lives, would not confirm or deny any investigation.

George H.W. Bush's son Jeb Bush, the former governor of Florida, when reached by email, said the hacking was "outrageous" and the decision to publish the material showed "total disregard for privacy."

The word "Guccifer" was plastered across the photos published on the website, which quotes "Guccifer" as describing himself as a veteran hacker who has long been in the government's sights.

Free email accounts from commercial providers are especially vulnerable to hackers who exploit easy-to-use features to reset email passwords. AOL's email passwords can be reset by a hacker who could discover, for example, the birth year of a customer's mother, a father's middle name or the name of a favorite pet.

Last year, after The Associated Press revealed that Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney and some top aides had used private email accounts to

conduct state business at times when Romney was governor of Massachusetts, Romney's free Microsoft Hotmail account was hacked. The alleged hacker claimed to have guessed the answer to a security question about Romney's favorite pet in order to gain access to the account and change the password. The anonymous hacker said Romney's account on DropBox, a file-sharing service, also was compromised.

A college student in Tennessee, David Kernell, was convicted in April 2010 on federal charges of hacking into Sarah Palin's private emails weeks before the 2008 presidential election. Kernell had correctly guessed answers to security questions guarding Palin's account, giving him access.

Last year, a group of hackers known as the D33D Company published a list of what it said were usernames and passwords for more than 450,000 email accounts, including more than 25,000 AOL accounts. It was not immediately clear whether the Bush family's hacked AOL accounts were among these.

#### Microsoft and Symantec Disrupt Cyber Crime Ring

Software makers Microsoft Corp and Symantec Corp said they disrupted a global cyber crime operation by shutting down servers that controlled hundreds of thousands of PCs without the knowledge of their users.

The move made it temporarily impossible for infected PCs around the world to search the web, though the companies offered free tools to clean machines through messages that were automatically pushed out to infected computers.

Technicians working on behalf of both companies raided data centers in Weehawken, New Jersey, and Manassas, Virginia, on Wednesday, accompanied by U.S. federal marshals, under an order issued by the U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Virginia.

They seized control of one server at the New Jersey facility and persuaded the operators of the Virginia data center to take down a server at their parent company in the Netherlands, according to Richard Boscovich, assistant general counsel with Microsoft's Digital Crimes Unit.

Boscovich told Reuters that he had "a high degree of confidence" that the operation had succeeded in bringing down the cyber crime operation, known as the Bamital botnet.

"We think we got everything, but time will tell," he said.

The servers that were pulled off line on Wednesday had been used to communicate with what Microsoft and Symantec estimate are between 300,000 and 1 million PCs currently infected with malicious software that enslaved them into the botnet.

The companies said that the Bamital operation hijacked search results and engaged in other schemes that the companies said fraudulently charge businesses for online advertisement clicks.

Bamital's organizers also had the ability to take control of infected PCs, installing other types of computer viruses that could engage in identity theft, recruit PCs into networks that attack websites and conduct other

types of computer crimes.

Now that the servers have been shut down, users of infected PCs will be directed to a site informing them that their machines are infected with malicious software when they attempt to search the web.

Microsoft and Symantec are offering them free tools to fix their PCs and restore access to web searches via messages automatically pushed out to victims.

The messages warn: "You have reached this website because your computer is very likely to be infected by malware that redirects the results of your search queries. You will receive this notification until you remove the malware from your computer."

It was the sixth time that Microsoft has obtained a court order to disrupt a botnet since 2010. Previous operations have targeted bigger botnets, but this is the first where infected users have received warnings and free tools to clean up their machines.

Microsoft runs a Digital Crimes Unit out of its Redmond, Washington, headquarters that is staffed by 11 attorneys, investigators and other staff who work to help law enforcement fight financial crimes and exploitation of children over the web.

Symantec approached Microsoft about a year ago, asking the maker of Windows software to collaborate in trying to take down the Bamital operation. Last week they sought a court order to seize the Bamital servers.

The two companies said they conservatively estimate that the Bamital botnet generated at least \$1 million a year in profits for the organizers of the operation. They said they will learn more about the size of the operation after they analyze information from infected machines that check in to the domains once controlled by Bamital's servers.

Their complaint identified 18 "John Doe" ringleaders, scattered from Russia and Romania to Britain, the United States and Australia, who registered websites and rented servers used in the operation under fictitious names. The complaint was filed last week with a federal court in Alexandria and unsealed on Wednesday.

The complaint alleges that the ringleaders made money through a scheme known as "click fraud" in which criminals get cash from advertisers who pay websites commissions when their users click on ads.

Bamital redirected search results from Google, Yahoo and Microsoft's Bing search engines to sites with which the authors of the botnet have financial relationships, according to the complaint.

The complaint also charges that Bamital's operators profited by forcing infected computers to generate large quantities of automated ad clicks without the knowledge of PC users.

Symantec researcher Vikram Thakur said Bamital is just one of several major botnets in a complex underground "click fraud ecosystem" that he believes generates at least tens of millions of dollars in revenue.

He said that researchers at will comb the data on the servers in order to better understand how the click fraud ecosystem works and potentially

identify providers of fraudulent ads and traffic brokers.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg in the world of click fraud," said Thakur.

Boscovich said he believes the botnet originated in Russia or Ukraine because affiliated sites install a small text file known as a cookie that is written in Russian on infected computers.

The cookie file contains the Russian phrase "yatutuzebil," according to the court filing. That can loosely be translated as "I was here," he said.

Microsoft provided details on the takedown operation on its blog: [http://blogs.technet.com/b/microsoft\\_blog/archive/2013/02/06/microsoft-and-symantec-take-down-bamital-botnet-that-hijacks-online-searches.aspx](http://blogs.technet.com/b/microsoft_blog/archive/2013/02/06/microsoft-and-symantec-take-down-bamital-botnet-that-hijacks-online-searches.aspx)

### Whonix: An OS for The Era of Anonymous and Wikileaks

Anonymity is an increasingly scarce commodity. Google's latest Transparency Report revealed government requests for data about users of its online services are increasing. It's not hard to find examples of threats to privacy either intentional or unintentional.

However, for almost as long as there have been concerns about protecting privacy on the Internet, there have been tools available to do the job. In many cases these tools, such as GPG and Tor, are available for free. But it is one thing to have access to these tools, and another to cobble them together into an effective solution that preserves your identity from prying eyes.

Whonix is a project to build an operating system that will offer the maximum privacy and anonymity possible straight out of the box. Its creator, 'Adrelanos', says the aim is to make it as hard as possible for privacy-conscious users to make missteps when it comes to remaining anonymous. "It also provides loads of documentation and possibilities for interested users to make it even more secure," he says.

Adrelanos says the project began because he wanted to run more than just a basic browser over the Tor network. At the time, online guides to remaining anonymous could often be contradictory.

"Running applications directly on a user's operating system was implicitly assumed," Adrelanos says. "Some people would argue for using proxy settings or a socksifier. Other argued that applications might not honour proxy settings or that there could be bugs in the socksifier, or even protocol leaks."

The guides on the topic were often partial and not updated to take new developments into account. "One guide had this precaution and another included different precautions, but none really included all important considerations," Adrelanos says.

The guides were also complicated and made a lot of assumptions or missed out important details.

"Starting fresh with a wiki page on the official Tor homepage looked like

a good idea to me, to allow others to check if I badly messed up or to let others improve the guide so everyone profits."

"In the beginning the [Whonix] project wasn't even called project," he says. "It was called a guide named TorBOX and was a simple wiki page in the Torproject.org wiki." The original guide was created in January 2012.

"This guide became more and more sophisticated and because manually following the steps in it took a lot of time, shell scripts to make it easier were created by Anonymous. As building it became more time consuming and more complicated, and as more people became interested, the first binary builds were created by Anonymous."

Whonix itself is a virtualised operating system based on Debian GNU/Linux and uses VirtualBox for the hosts VMs. It uses a dual VM design: The primary VM (Whonix-Workstation), which runs end-user applications, and a gateway (Whonix-Gateway) through which all network requests from the workstation VM are channelled, and which uses the Tor network.

"The Whonix-Workstation has, on purpose, no ability to find out its own real IP address," Adrelanos says. "This is because it has no direct network connection and can only connect to Tor on the Whonix-Gateway. The main goal is to stay anonymous. To hide the IP [address]."

"Technically 'IP hiding' is impossible," he adds. "It can only be replaced with another IP, and the Tor network was the best tool I found for this purpose. So the question was, how do I hide the IP from applications, if I am unable for technical and/or time reasons to check and/or modify all the applications in a very detailed manner?"

"The transparent Tor proxy, where the applications have no way to find out the real IP address and can only find out their Tor exit node IP address, looked like the best approach."

In addition, a whole computing environment dedicated to anonymity is less likely to be confused with a user's standard computing environment, Adrelanos says, preventing inadvertent privacy breaches.

While Whonix utilises Tor, it can offer advantages over a purely Tor-based approach, particularly when it comes to the dangers of applications or browser plug-ins, such as Flash and Java, leaking IP addresses. Because of the sandbox setup, applications running on Whonix-Workstation can at worst only leak the IP addresses of the internal (virtual) network.

Because it's a project that focused on anonymity and privacy, it is hard to get a picture of its user base; however, there have been approximately 14,000 downloads of Whonix-Gateway 0.45 directly from the project's Sourceforge homepage. (This number doesn't reflect those who built the project from source code or downloaded from mirrors.) "This is not a bad number, because the Tor network in total has 500,000 users," Adrelanos says.

As for who is using it, that is, naturally, even harder to know, Adrelanos says: "Use cases have included journalists, admins of hidden services [sites whose address is obfuscated by the Tor network], businesspeople, activists, hackers (however that word is defined and understood), people who want to protect themselves from hackers (or crackers), users who just want to protect their privacy..."

The task list for the project is "endless," Adrelanos says. He plans to

improve pretty much every aspect of Whonix, including increasing privacy and making it more resistant to more sophisticated attacks, adding multi-language support (both for the OS itself and the website), improving the documentation, working on an encrypted USB installer, adding an updater for the OS, and working on a graphical gateway.

There's no funding and very few contributors (of the three or so people who started the project, Adrelanos is currently the only active developer), but Adrelanos says progress "will remain steady". (Though he adds "there are no promises about what gets finished and what gets done, and what may never get done...")

He's keen for more contributors to join the project and says it's easy to get involved (Whonix has a page explaining how people can get involved.) Even contributing to the technical side is not that difficult, Adrelanos says. "Whonix mainly consists of application configuration files and Linux shell scripts. No real programming (in C or assembler) is involved yet. I believe developing something like Tor, Firefox, drivers, a compiler etc. is much more difficult than developing Whonix."

#### Court of Human Rights: Convictions for File Sharing Violate Human Rights

The European Court of Human Rights has declared that the copyright monopoly stands in direct conflict with fundamental Human Rights, as defined in the European Union and elsewhere. This means that as of today, nobody sharing culture in the EU may be convicted just for breaking the copyright monopoly law; the bar for convicting was raised considerably. This can be expected to have far-reaching implications, not just judicially, but in confirming that the copyright monopoly stands at odds with human rights.

The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg is no dismissible small player. It is the court that oversees the European Convention on Human Rights, which is part of the Constitution of the European Union and of most European states. When this court makes a decision, that decision gets constitutional status in all of Europe (except for Belarus, which is not a signatory).

Therefore, the copyright monopoly as such which is ordinary law in European states was just defined as taking a back seat to the constitutional right to share and seek culture and knowledge, as defined in the European Convention on Human Rights, article 10:

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.

We have long claimed that the copyright monopoly stands in direct conflict with civil liberties (one of my most well-known keynotes, Copyright regime vs. civil liberties, even highlights this in the title). While the judiciary is slow to react to new phenomena, and issues like this percolate very slowly to the top courts where verdicts make a real difference, I'm very happy to see that the issue did indeed get to the relevant court at last, and that the Court made the only reasonable decision.



However, this verdict doesn't mean that people sharing culture can never be convicted. Exceptions can be made to Human Rights according to a well-defined three-step test: the verdict must be necessary in a democratic society, prescribed by law (the copyright monopoly already is), and pursuing a legitimate aim (this can be discussed at length).

This means that people can no longer get convicted for violating the copyright monopoly alone. The court just declared it illegal for any court in Europe to convict somebody for breaking the copyright monopoly law when sharing culture, only on the merits of breaking the law. A court that tries somebody for violating the copyright monopoly must now also show that a conviction is necessary to defend democracy itself in order to convict. This is a considerably higher bar to meet.

I am happy to see that people persecuted for sharing culture and knowledge all over Europe got this quite strong judicial decision in their back. I'd love to see the copyright industry lobby try to make a case why it is necessary to defend democracy to convict a single mother of three who shared pop songs.

The summary in English of the French verdict is well worth reading (with my highlights):

For the first time in a judgment on the merits, the European Court of Human Rights has clarified that a conviction based on copyright law for illegally reproducing or publicly communicating copyright protected material can be regarded as an interference with the right of freedom of expression and information under Article 10 of the European Convention. Such interference must be in accordance with the three conditions enshrined in the second paragraph of Article 10 of the Convention. This means that a conviction or any other judicial decision based on copyright law, restricting a person's or an organisation's freedom of expression, must be pertinently motivated as being necessary in a democratic society, apart from being prescribed by law and pursuing a legitimate aim.

It is, in other words, no longer sufficient to justify a sanction or any other judicial order restricting one's artistic or journalistic freedom of expression on the basis that a copyright law provision has been infringed. Neither is it sufficient to consider that the unauthorised use, reproduction or public communication of a work cannot rely on one of the narrowly interpreted exceptions in the copyright law itself, including the application of the so-called three-step test [...]

UPDATE 1: Be careful interpreting this verdict as a free-for-all. It's not. What it says is that violating the copyright monopoly laws is not enough for a conviction, and that the copyright monopoly laws collide with Human Rights. Those are two huge wins in themselves. But it doesn't mean nobody will ever get convicted for sharing culture again just that courts have to justify why a conviction is also necessary in a democratic society, in addition to having met the normal and previous bar for a conviction.

It will take years to flesh out precedents with this wide a margin for interpretation, and the specific action on trial as well as its intent will be under close scrutiny for its value to democracy as such. Record label lawyers will justify a conviction with circular reasoning (upholding the law is necessary in a democracy, so the prerequisites are already met) and human rights lawyers will probably strike down any conviction (human rights trump all). So while this verdict gave two important victories, it's not the end of the conflict nor the end of the

war.

UPDATE 2: Some people have pointed at the end verdict and said it's insane and asked how it's good news. The overall verdict was about photographs taken at a fashion show and later published commercially, where the ECHR found that that human rights had not been violated in handing out insane damages. But the end decision isn't the interesting thing with this verdict—it's the two subdecisions noted above before the court arrived at an end verdict:

The copyright monopoly does come at odds with the human right to seek and share knowledge and culture;

In order to justify any verdict based on the copyright monopoly laws, the court must therefore also show that the verdict is necessary in a democratic society.

In this case, the ECHR found that the fashion show and the publication were thoroughly commercial, and didn't have an important democratic function worth protecting over the copyright monopoly. In essence, the court is saying that political speech and political expression can trump the copyright monopoly—for instance, if you were seeding a documentary on human rights abuses with the intent of bringing about political change, that action will very likely be legal after this verdict, which it wasn't before.

So the verdict—or rather, two subdecisions leading up to the verdict—opens up a huge gray area of law which was previously pitch black, stating clear examples of where the freedom of expression would take precedence over the copyright monopoly (even if they arrive at the end conclusion in this particular case that it doesn't meet that bar).

A few people have observed that the court seems to draw the line at commercial vs. noncommercial, implying that all file-sharing would always be in the clear, but I wouldn't bet on that interpretation (although it would certainly be a great outcome).

The real interesting cases come when you're seeding ordinary commercial movies in a political context with a political intent. That one's a coin toss for now.

## Facebook Broke the Internet

A weird thing happened on Thursday night. Anytime you clicked on a link or most of the time anyways—some strange Internet force directed you to an error page on Facebook. The URL is full of weird randomly generated code, but it's definitely a Facebook page. You can even check your notifications even though you didn't even want to visit Facebook. No, this is not a conspiracy. In all likelihood, it's a bug that will be fixed within the hour. (Unless, it's not, in which case things will get very interesting.) If you need to use the Internet before then, simply log out of Facebook, and you should be good to go.

Folks that understand how these Internet things work have quickly surmised that the bug must be related to Facebook Connect, the ubiquitous, one-click log-in feature that you've been using much more than you thought you were. If true this would mean that every time you're redirected by this bug or whatever it is, you're heading to a site that's controlled by

Facebook. We couldn't have said anything so dramatic yesterday, but today it's become painfully apparent. Facebook rules the Internet. There are few corners that it does not touch, and whether you read your News Feed or not, Facebook can ruin your Thursday night of Internet surfing any time it wants to.

### Social Media Control After Death

Most people can't live without Facebook but what happens to your Facebook page when you are no longer living? New Hampshire and other states are trying to figure that out.

State Rep. Peter Sullivan has introduced legislation to allow the executor of an estate control over the social networking pages of the dead. Last week, the New Hampshire House of Representatives voted 222-128 to give Sullivan more time to write an amendment that begins a study of the issue.

The bill proposed by Sullivan, a Democrat from Manchester, would allow control of someone's Facebook, Twitter, and other accounts such as Gmail to be passed to the executor of their estate after death.

### No, Facebook Is Not Going Dark on February 29

Attention all Facebook users: You will not be able to access the social-networking site on Feb. 29, 30 and 31.

"Share this message with at least 15 of your friends for the best chance of alerting everyone," reads a message circulating on Facebook. "Many people will try to log in from February 29 to 31, just to find the site closed down for those days with no warning."

The message is absolutely right. You can't use Facebook on those days, because those particular days don't exist in February this year.

The message, reported by Sophos' Naked Security blog, is one of several Facebook scams, jokes and hoaxes that have circulated in the past few years.

Who can forget the time Lady Gaga "died"? Or the story about the two Spanish cousins dying of cancer, neither of whom were real?

More serious are the scams that con you in order to make money, such as the one promising a free Facebook T-shirt (it asked you to take a survey), or the one that Mark Zuckerberg will personally give you an iPad (in exchange for your email address and other personal information).

Even worse are fake Facebook pages hosted on other sites, which are designed to capture your username and password for the 800-million-strong social network. Facebook's done a good job of keeping malware out, but once you go off-site, you're on your own.

By adding email, instant messaging, search and video features over the past few years, Facebook is aiming to be the Internet for its users.

The same thing happened in the 1990s with AOL, which replicated almost everything available on the wider Internet within its own walled Disneyland.

For many AOL users, AOL was the Internet, partly because AOL's dial-up subscribers had to go through the service to reach the real Internet. The business model collapsed when affordable broadband connections reached most residences in the United States after 2000.

But both then and now, there are millions of people who trust their particular service and don't care to see what's beyond its walls.

It's those people who are targeted by Facebook hoaxes and scams, in the assumption that they'll believe the scams and forward them to their friends.

Instead of becoming one of those people, ask yourself whether something's too good to be true, and then trust your instincts. That's true both on Facebook and on the Internet as a whole.

#### Daughter Given \$200 to Quit Facebook

Spending too much time on Facebook? More than half of Facebook users say they've taken vacations from the site. Now comes the story of a 14-year-old who did better - she managed to get paid for quitting.

Rachel Baier, a high school freshman in Massachusetts, went to her dad with a deal: no Facebook for the rest of the school year in exchange for cash.

"She approached me. She has been frustrated she hasn't been able to find a babysitting job and she has been looking for ways to get cash," Baier told ABC News. "So she asked, 'If I didn't use Facebook for so long would you pay me?'"

Baier, knowing that his daughter spends hours and hours on the site every day, thought she was joking at first. "I said, 'Go away, you can't live without Facebook!'" But Rachel was serious. Her dad drew up the paperwork. "I went back and thought about it, and said if you are going to do it, we are going to sign a contract. And she said okay."

The contract says that from Feb. 4, 2013 through June 26, 2013, Rachel will have her Facebook account deactivated. She will receive \$50 halfway through and the remaining \$150 on June 26, which is the last day of ninth grade.

Baier says that he thinks his daughter will keep her part of the bargain. "She has deactivated a few times for the weekend," he said "She has spent two to three years on Facebook for 24/7, she realizes there is a lot of talk and noise."

Rachel, who was at school when we spoke to her father, told him she doesn't worry about being left out by friends.

"I asked her about that. She said, 'Dad, I see my friends at school. I am in the loop and I can still text them,'" Baier said.

But even if Rachel does have a moment of weakness and yearn to see her

Newsfeed, her dad now holds the keys to the castle. "Part of the agreement," he says "was that she allowed me to change the password. She can't get back in and turn it back on."

## Microsoft's 'Blue' Wave Is Coming to More Than Just Windows

As we've known for a few months, the Windows client team at Microsoft is working on its first "feature-pack" update for Windows 8, supposedly due this summer/fall, which is codenamed "Blue."

But it turns out Blue isn't a Windows thing only, according to one very accurate tipster of mine who doesn't want to be identified.

Blue also is the way Microsoft is referring to the next substantial platform update for Windows Phone, the Windows Services (like SkyDrive, Hotmail, etc.), and Windows Server, according to my source. In other words, Blue is a wave of product refreshes which are not expected to arrive exactly all on the same day, but which are meant to be released more or less around the same time.

Before these various Blues come to market, there will continue to be minor fixes, firmware updates and new features added to Windows 8, Windows RT, Windows Services and Windows Phone. On the phone side of the house, for example, the first minor update, codenamed Portico, already has made its way out to a number of Windows Phone users.

Blue represents a major change in how Microsoft builds, deploys and markets software and services. To date, many Microsoft teams like Windows, Windows Live and Windows Server have been focused on delivering major platform updates every two to three years. The challenge is to get them to pivot around yearly platform updates, the first of which will hit as part of the Blue wave.

On the Windows side, the changes required to make this happen will be especially far reaching and pronounced. Instead of RTMing a new version of Windows once every three or so years, and then hoping/praying OEMs can get the final bits tested and preloaded on new hardware a few months later, Microsoft is going to try to push Blue out to users far more quickly, possibly via the Windows Store, my contact said.

There's still no word on specific new features coming to any of the Blue wave of products and services. But tweaks to the user experience, new dev-platform related bits, as well as new versions of Internet Explorer, Mail, Calendar, Bing and other integrated apps are likely to figure into the Blue picture, my source said. Blue will include some kernel and driver-level updates which could help with battery life and overall performance, according to my source, but backward compatibility with Windows 8 and Windows Phone 8 seem to be a priority.

I know there are still some Blue doubters out there, but Charon at Ma-Config.com found a recent mention of Blue in a member of the Windows team's LinkedIn profile:  
winbluemention

Windows 9 is still seemingly on the roadmap, too, by the way, but it's not clear when Microsoft intends to deliver it. Charon also found a LinkedIn poster mentioning his work on Windows 9 recently:

win9teamindia

For the time being, as executives like Windows Chief Financial Officer Tami Reller have said repeatedly, Microsoft envisions Windows 8 as something more than a one-season wonder. (Reller has said Microsoft considers Windows 8 a product "of multiple selling seasons.") That makes more sense if you think about Blue - and Lilac and Fuchsia or whatever Blue's successors are codenamed - as updates to Windows 8, rather than as Windows 9, 10, and beyond.

I very, very seldom post a single-sourced rumor. But go ahead and Tracour this Blue update. I'm feeling pretty solid on this one.

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